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AUTHOR Robinson, Helja
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ABSTRACT

This article shows that bilingualism can be an enriching part of children's lives. A young child named Anna, living in a bilingual environment in which English and Finnish were spoken, was observed and her speech recorded. This discussion focuses on aspects of Anna's acquisition of language. Initial discussion works toward a definition of bilingualism and describes the social experiences of the bilingual child and the effects of bilingualism on the child. Daily observation and recording of the child's speech revealed that the majority language, which, after a move from Finland to the United States, changed from Finnish to English, emerged quickly from a receptive stage and moved to a productive stage. While Anna was able to conduct role-play exclusively in English 4 weeks after entering nursery school in Mississippi, emotional attachment to certain Finnish words was evident. Extensive examples of Anna's code-switching, keeping the languages separate, self-correcting behavior, literacy learning, learning to count, concept acquisition, and second language maintenance, are provided. Concluding remarks focus on the role of the teacher with bilingual students in the classroom. (RH)

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Abstract

Heljä Robinson

Anna's Worlds: Whole Language Learning in a Bilingual Context

Attitudes toward bilingualism in the United States are commonly negative, driven by an English-first or English-only melting pot mentality. The article shows that bilingualism can be an enriching part of children's lives. Cross-cultural competency in meaningful linguistic contexts has a beneficial effect not only on children's conceptual and emotional development but on school-home interaction as well. Bilingualism is an excellent channel for breaking down atomistic pedagogical traditions and replacing them with more holistic approaches to learning. The article is based on observations of one child living in a bilingual environment.

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Anna's World: Whole Language Learning in a Bilingual Context

"Me want you come mukaan!"

The speaker is my daughter Anna, a three-year old bilingual child with an American father and a Finnish mother. She is in a nursery school in Oxford, Mississippi, where our family moved just before her third birthday. She is speaking to her nursery school teacher, who for obvious reasons doesn't understand her.

"Come what?"

"Come mukaan!"

What could she possibly mean, wonders the bewildered teacher.

A good deal of research has focused on the handicaps of bilingualism and its negative side-effects. Bilingualism is problematic in the school situation. Bilinguals are often perceived solely in terms of the teacher's native language, and therefore as "semilinguals": people who don't even speak one language adequately. Particularly when a child has just moved to this country from abroad, as Anna had, he or she has considerable initial difficulty making the linguistic transition, and in that transitional period can easily be branded "learning-disabled." This label can stick long after the child has overcome his or her initial difficulties, and can become

a self-fulfilling prophecy. In American society the attitude problem of teachers and administers arises partly from the melting-pot mentality, the notion that everyone who lives in America should conform culturally and linguistically to the norms established by the dominant white middle-class Protestant American-English-speaking majority (Banks, 1988 , Hornby, 1977, Hirsch, 1987).

The problems of bilingualism are if anything only accentuated when viewed from the parents' point of view. The melting-pot ideology means eradicating one's own cultural heritage as far as possible--the way one talks, acts, even thinks and feels. Immense pressure is brought to bear on the parents of bilingual children to fit into the monolingual straitjacket. Children are often taught--sometimes subconsciously, but there have been many concerted and even legislated programs in this area--to feel ashamed of their "Old World" parents, of the fact that their parents talk and dress "funny," of their parents' accents and customs. The negativism has intimidated many parents into not attempting to raise their children bilingually. Many parents experience a gap between their home environment and the environment the child gets thrown into in school regardless of language difficulties. The cultural gap every family feels between home and school is accentuated in cases of bilingual families.

But bilingualism is not only a problem--not only a negative phenomenon. Once we recognize that it is a fact of life--that, as Grosjean (1982) points out, more than half of the world's population is bilingual, and

that even in an officially monolingual country like America many children live in environments of bilingual learning--we can either treat it as a "problem" to be struggled against, suffered through, wondered at, or we can explore the cognitive and affective richness of bilingualism, and draw on some of that richness to improve the quality of everyone's education.

In this article I want to take a look at bilingualism as an enriching experience from the child's point of view and help teachers and parents to find ways of supporting bilingualism instead of being intimidated by it. After discussing bilingualism and current research on it, I propose to address myself to a single case, Anna, specifically through the "hermeneutical" method of attempting to reconstruct her mental and emotional processes in navigating the many oceans of her bilingual environment. Since Anna is my daughter, my observation of her speech is holistic in background and analytical for the purposes of this essay; I will attempt throughout the discussion of Anna's bilingual speech to interpret specific speech usages against the larger background of her experience and personality.

1

Defining bilingualism is not an easy task. A spectrum of definitions have been offered. Van Obeke (in Harding and Riley, 1986) defines bilingualism as an optional or obligatory means for efficient two-way communication between two or more different worlds using two different

linguistic systems. Most definitions differentiate between a bilingual society an a bilingual individual (Hauge, 1956, Weinreich, 1954, Mackey, 1962 in Grossjean, 1982). There are many officially bilingual countries such as Switzerland, India, Israel, Finland, Canada and Czechoslovakia, with large numbers of monoligual inhabitants; and there are officially monolingual countries like the United States where bilingualism at the individual level is a fact of life.

Bilingualism is a relative concept. What is the degree of competence that determines when an individual is bilingual? What constitutes native-like command of a language? As Harding and Riley (1986) point out, bilingualism is not an all or nothing phenomenon but a complex concept that exists in various degrees.

Bilingualism can be "productive," meaning that the bilingual can use both languages actively, or "receptive," meaning that he or she can only use one language actively; he or she understands the second language, has a passive command of it, but can't produce it. When Anna and our family moved to the United States, for example, her bilingualism was receptive in this sense: she could produce Finnish actively but could only understand English actively. After a month or so in the United States she developed an active command of English as well, and her bilingualism became productive.

As Anna's example makes clear, language patterns in bilingual families are not static but change with changes in the environment.

Moving to another country is the most drastic kind of environmental change, obviously, but it is not the only one; if one parent works far from home, for example, the relative time the child spends exposed to and motivated to use the two languages may shift. The more "saturated" the child's environment is with a given language, the more productive his or her use of it will tend to be. If one parent dies or moves out of the house, the child's bilingualism may become dormant, wholly passive; since nothing is ever forgotten, it will never disappear entirely, but the child may lose the ability to recall lexical items to consciousness. According to Harding and Riley (1986, 35) bilingualism can fail from the outset if one parent doesn't understand the other parent's language. This kind of family often becomes monolingual.

Bilingualism can start in infancy, childhood, adolescence or adulthood. In the first two cases the production of the language sounds native while language learned later in life is often heard with a foreign accent by the native speakers. Bilingualism in infancy is called simultaneous acquisition (Harding & Riley,1986). It is very common that one of the child's two languages is dominant, but the relationship is very flexible and changing.

Bilingualism often happens simultaneously with biculturalism but can also occur separately. The bicultural child has a dual language and cultural heritage. Sometimes culturally bound experiences are impossible to express in a different language. For instance, it is very cumbersome and

awkward to try to explain in Finnish about sororities, peanut butter, and football cheerleaders because those phenomena don't exist or are just being introduced to Finland.

Grosjean (1982) studied bilinguals' self-concepts and mono- and bilinguals' attitudes towards each other. He found that bilingual children reacted more favorably towards monolinguals than monolinguals to them. Monolinguals viewed bilingualism as a hindrance to life while 52 % of bilinguals and 67 % of trilinguals regarded their language abilities as a richness rather than an inconvenience. Some of the disadvantages that bilinguals acknowledged were hardships in translation and fear of not feeling at home anywhere. Some of the advantages the bilingual subjects mentioned were feeling at home in two cultures broadening of life, being able to read literature in two languages, mastering different means and manners of expression, open mindedness and awareness of social interaction in general.

Recent studies have paid attention to bilingual learners in areas of cognitive, linguistic, and social development. At this point there is no evidence that bilingualism has either a positive or a negative effect on the child's intelligence (Arnberg, 1987). Some research done on bilinguals' IQ have been proved erroneous due to cultural bias. Some test results (Lambert & Anisfeld, 1969) have suggested that the structure of intelligence of bilinguals is more diversified and they have more flexibility in their thinking.

Cognitive development encompasses processes like knowledge, thinking, conceptualization and ability to solve problems. There has been some indication that bilingual children are able to discriminate between the word sound and the meaning much earlier than monolinguals (Arnberg, 1987). There are also results that indicate that understanding arbitrary labels in their metalinguistic awareness 1) develops earlier than in monolingual children (Estrin & Chaney 1988). However, there have been contrary results also, so the common agreement seems to lean towards the bilingual children's greater sensitivity to formal aspects of language rather than their greater understanding of deeper language levels.

In the speed of language development there doesn't seem to be any significant difference between mono- and bilingual learners. As with monolingual children first-born bilinguals are likely to learn the languages faster than their younger siblings. Research indicates that socially bilinguals are more able to sympathize with those who are experiencing communication difficulties and understand these needs and attempt to meet them (Arnberg, 1987).

Compared to the first language acquisition of a monolingual child, a bilingual child's language will include features like:

-Language mixing

-Code switching (inserting a word or a phrase from one language into an utterance in the other or switching languages after an utterance) and translation

-Interference (involuntary influence of another language, especially when the languages are not in balance). Interference can be seen in pronunciation, idioms and word order.

Children learn language in an embedded or contextual way (Donaldson, 1979)--in other words, in their natural environment, their daily routines and play. This is why it's important to observe children in naturalistic contexts (Lund & Duchan, 1988). Many studies concerning bilingualism have failed because of the difficulty in controlling the factors involved in bilingualism. Also there is a lack of long range studies on bilingual learning. Many bilingual studies have been conducted by interested parents of bilingual children (Arnberg, 1987)--like this one, for example.

2

Anna's majority language was Finnish until she moved to Mississippi at the age of 2 years and 11 months. Since her move to America via Seattle where her grandparents live, her productive competence of English has been gradually accelerating. Earlier, in Finland, where she comprehended everything Daddy was saying, she didn't have the need to speak it much because she also knew that he spoke and could understand Finnish. This was, as I mentioned earlier, a classical situation of receptive bilingualism. With her American grandparents she tried Finnish a few times but quickly realized that her speech was not being understood. After

three weeks in the country she sat in the motel swimming pool slowly easing towards another little girl in the pool and said: "What you name?" and after hearing the answer plopped a ball in the girl's lap and they started playing together.

Daily observation and recording of Anna's speech shows that the majority language, which has changed from Finnish to English, seems to be emerging fast from its receptive stage to a productive stage. Four weeks after entering nursery school she conducted role-play exclusively in English.

The example I began with, where Anna told her nursery school teacher "Me want you come mukaan," is a good example of language mixing and code switching, which are charateristic of a bilingual child's speech development. "Mukaan" is a Finnish postposition meaning "with," and usable either with a possessive pronoun ("sinun mukaasi," literally "your with," meaning "with you") or, as in Anna's usage, without ("Minä haluan tulla mukaan," "I want to come with"). In this case Anna's emotional attachment to the Finnish word "mukaan" in an otherwise English sentence is not hard to guess at. All spring, as her parents and older sisters (Laura, 9, and Sara, 8) were discussing the upcoming move to Mississippi, Anna would consistently respond to the discussion with a simple shouted "Mukaan! Mukaan!" accompanied with some trepidation but also a good deal of trust and excitement. When she heard her family discussing the move, she wanted to make sure everyone was aware of her existence and desire

to accompany them on the trip. She was, of course, always immediately reassured that she was going too, that no one was going anywhere without her. It is likely that this word was engraved on her emotional memory as a token of her desire not to be left behind--and in the insecure new environment of the nursery school (she had been in family day care in Finland, but this was not only a new school environment, they all spoke a new language) perhaps that word could wield the same reassuring power to ensure her inclusion in the group.

Other examples of Anna's code-switching include:

- "Daddy, that mies (man) loudly speak". This code switch is both lexical ("mies") and syntactic: the more flexible Finnish word order allows the insertion of an adverb before the verb, whereas this is discouraged in English. Like the "mukaan" example, "mies" may have an underlying emotional association, perhaps a church association. The man in the sentence refers to a minister whose booming voice in a small church sanctuary rather frightened Anna. She was used to Finnish ministers preaching in larger churches in Finland, into a microphone.

- "He nuolee (licks) you". (About a dog) This is an interesting example of choice of words. The previous summer Anna was playing a game with Daddy at Grandma's house that involved this discussion. Daddy: "The puppy is going to lick you!" Anna: "No puppy lick!". This was repeated almost every time there was a dog in sight--a way for Daddy to help Anna cope with the slight anxiety she had around Grandma's lively dog. Before this

she used to use her own phonological version of the word "nuolee," switching the vowels into "noilee." Anna could have used the English word "lick" but perhaps she also wanted to experiment with how she has grown past her earlier version of the Finnish word "nuolee."

Anna tends to have more language mixing in utterances where she is attempting to portray something in Finnish that she came across in nursery school, which is one of the totally English environments for her.

- "Mää sanon mun koulussa (I'll say in my school) me mine Mommy ask question." Here she is playing at home--her bilingual living ground, where she can freely cross language boundaries without causing hardships in interaction with others. Play acts very much as imaginary mediation between home Finnish-English and school English environment.

The nursery school is a never-ending source of delight for Anna. In her class she has seven other bilingual children. Although there are so many bilingual children, the teachers don't seem to have a very clear concept of what it means to experience life through two languages. In fact, some of them aren't even aware of this fact and can't understand what possible benefit they could get as teachers by knowing about the bilingual's experiences. Most bilingual children are thought of as very quiet and retiring children. In a discussion (10/24/1989) with one of the students working in the nursery school it became apparent that bilingualism doesn't have any reality in the experiences of an average American teacher. The student told me about Anna wanting to have her

Finnish book read to her that she had brought from home for show and tell time in school. "I don't know Finnish. She thought that I know how to read it." I suggested maybe the book could be "read " to her by talking about the pictures in the book. This was a novel idea and hadn't even occurred to anybody in the group--perhaps because the fear of the foreign language blocks reaction beyond it.

How can a child keep the two language systems separate? An awareness of two different languages comes through contact with people. For Anna there is Daddy's language and Mommy's language, and even though she knows both her parents speak both languages she has associated Finnish with her mother and English with her father. She will always make an attempt to speak the appropriate language (10/29/1989):

Daddy: "What did you say?"

Anna: "No what!" (Interference from Finnish, literal translation for nothing) "Me talking to Mommy." (Turning to me) "Äiti, ei mua enää nukuta." (I'm not sleepy any more).

Translation from one language to another is often subconscious - it has to do with the current discussion partner. Sometimes Anna will start to say a sentence in Finnish, notice the parent near her is Daddy, and say: "Silly, I thought you were Mommy." Putting her words in the appropriate language happens quite naturally. This illustrates the point that language and literacy is very much a social skill and ties in with cultural competency (Schieffelin & Cochran-Smith, 1984).

In speech situations one of us will often use the word Anna was looking for in the next sentence and she will pick it up from there. Here is a conversation that has examples of self-correcting (underlined):

In the morning, getting ready for nursery school.

Anna: My baby. He no can't put his jalat (feet) down! His hand no can't put down. Here is this baby. Thank you! (Places doll on Daddy's stomach)

Daddy: Is it going to sleep on Daddy's tummy?

Anna: This baby no mahu (fit) here. This no mahu little one (Even a little one doesn't fit here).

Daddy: Doesn't it fit there? There! Are you my lovey girl?

Anna: Here is my lovey baby. You hug mine baby. You can take yours baby (Hands the doll to Daddy) Me no need take yours baby.

Daddy: Can I have this one?

Anna: Can take other one. Here is Mommy then. Here is kummat (both) babies.

Daddy: Are you giving them both to me?

Anna; Yes, you take <u>both</u> babies . Let me see, they no <u>fit</u> here. They too big. (trying to put a doll in a purse)

Daddy: That one fits.

Anna: You can do like this. Me can't put it like that (turns flaps in the purse) I open it. His head going down. Look, this is my laukku (purse).

Daddy: It is!

Anna: Me cool have dis many kitties (holding up three fingers and

pointing to the picture in front of the purse)

Daddy: Three.

Anna: Yeah, that many. We have kitty , too.

Daddy: What does Kitty say?

Anna: Meow! Me our kitty! (Curls in Daddy's lap)

Daddy: Come here. I'll pet you. Would you like to be my princess?

Anna: Yes!

Daddy: Do you know what a princess needs? Clothes on.

Anna: Me no wanna be pincess.

Daddy: You don't want to be a princess because you have to put your clothes on.

Anna: Yes, I don't wanna be pincess.

This conversation brings out some other features in Anna's speech. It reflects her position in the family as the youngest of three girls and somewhat behind the speech development of a monolingual three-year-old. She often uses double negatives, overgeneralizations, doesn't use articles (interference from Finnish where there are no articles) and she uses the pronoun he for both feminine and masculine. (This may be partly interference---in Finnish there is only one word for third person singular, hän, or colloquial se-- and partly phonological, since English "he" is considerably easier for a three-year-old to pronounce than "she")

Anna's literacy learning is bicultural. There are lots of books in the house in both languages (and some other foreign languages) and she sees

members of her family reading, writing , typing, or working at the computer daily. She writes letters to me in the nursery school every day and every afternoon works on her "Läskyt" (homework) in imitation of her big sisters. She writes shopping lists like this one:

Figure 1: Anna's shopping list reflecting an understanding of writing from the left to right:

- teidälle video (a video for you)
- minulle bike (a bike for me)

Anna is fascinated by letters, words and symbols. She recognizes the McDonald's sign, and every sign that has an "A" or other letters that occur in the names of the family members is significant and causes great excitement.

One day (10/25/1989) she was helping me with the laundry. I lifted her up higher so she could reach the wet clothes from the washer and throw them in the dryer. After that was done she said: "Äiti, mitä tässä lukee? (Mommy, what does it say here?)" "Kenmore, all-in-one laundry system," I said, pointing out the words as I was reading the sign. "Tämä on minun kiljain!" (This is my letter) she said, pointing to the two "A's" in the sign.

Cereal boxes, egg cartons leap to life on our breakfast table; pine needles, blocks and noodles represent possible Anna's letters. This reflects the egocentrism of a three-year-old and underlines the importance of learning concepts and language in a meaningful way in real life contexts. The bond between the child and her environment is strengthened as she explores her self-identity:

Äiti, o:lla on pitkä house. Minä kirjoitin Anna Lobinson. (Mommy, o has a long house. I wrote Anna Robinson). This is a drawing of her long house:

Figure 2: A drawing of Anna's long house with letters A.

What she means by this is not quite clear. There seems to be some iconic association between the shape of the letter o and the drawn house. Does she live in it with her letter A? Or is the o from her last name? The idea of the o's house is intriguing because on Sunday 11/19/1989 she drew a whole notebook full of this house and different kinds of A's inside it, some with squiggly hairs:

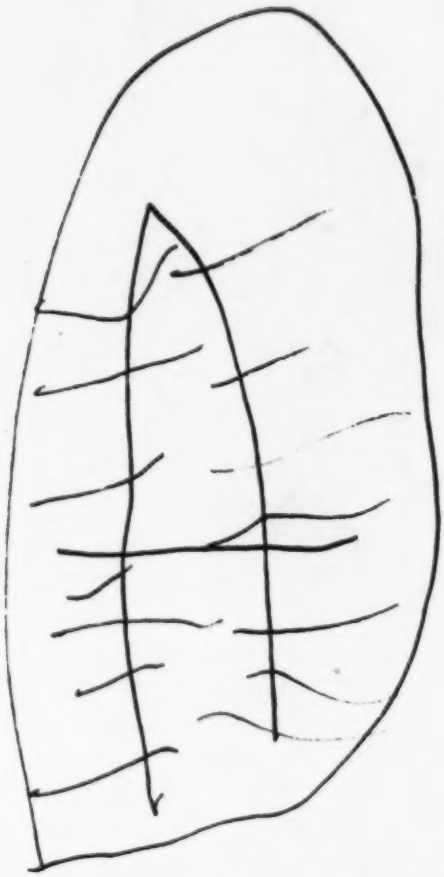

Figure 3: A variation of Anna's house with her letter in it.

This variation of the letter "A" drawings seemed to have something to do with the cactus that was brought to the house and Anna understood it to be dangerous to touch because its prickly thorns.

On 9/14/1989 she was reading a book and pointing to words using a reading voice:

"L-I-L hi mun." Anna has understood that symbols on a page mean something and when you are learning to read you use the letters to make different sounds. Her knowledge of letters is still undeveloped, so she uses imaginary letters (hi mun)--which could even be syllables (especially

if she thought it was Finnish). Letter awareness is clearly seen a few months later (April 25,1990) in "homework" done by Anna :

Figure 4. Sample of Anna's writing illustrating letter awareness.

In counting Anna is experimenting in both languages: She counts her dolls or other toys "Fifteen, nineteen, eighteen, fifeteen". "Minulla on kaks kavelita tuolla koulussa. On viisi, kuusi seittemän. On MONTA kaveleita minulla! "(I have two friends in school. I have five, six, seven. I have MANY friends in school). The repetition of "teens" sounds good in Anna's ears. "Fif(e)teen" is an interesting case. "Fifteen," an example of holistic learning (she learned the whole word as a discrete semantic entity), is

kavelita tuolla koulussa. On viisi, kuusi seittemän. On MONTA kaveleita minulla! "(I have two friends in school. I have five, six, seven. I have MANY friends in school). The repetition of "teens" sounds good in Anna's ears. "Fif(e)teen" is an interesting case. "Fifteen," an example of holistic learning (she learned the whole word as a discrete semantic entity), is listed first; then, after other holistically learned words somewhat out of sequence ("nineteen, eighteen") she returns to "fifteen," but now in an analytically learned way: she recognizes the numerals between 3 and 9 and realizes that you are supposed to add "-teen" to them after ten. By interference with the "fif-" of the teen-sequence, "five" becomes "fife." In the Finnish example of numeral usage she is getting the sequence right also.

Because of the two languages present in a family, bilingual children are always comparing, interpreting and translating from one language to another. Anna's big sisters, with whom she converses in Finnish, seem to have developed a genuine interest in what Anna is trying to get across, a factor which probably slows down but also enriches Anna's speech development. Word games, bilingual puns, looking up word etymologies, rhymes, being silly, singing and reading are part of Anna's everyday language environment. Bilingual puns are hard to understand if you don't have the command of both languages but for a bilingual child it's quite natural to make them up. For example: one of the older girls says of a family acquaintaince, "She's a nice ihminen" (woman, nice person). This

plays on the Finnish word for female person (a slightly formal way of saying a woman), "naisihminen," woman-person, the first syllable of which, "nais-" (meaning "woman") is pronounced like the English word "nice." Such realizations and comparisons are common in the family. Language itself, the way it sounds and looks and changes, is talked about a lot . You might hear a conversation like this:

Laura: Miksi amerikkalaiset sanoo hilsettä? (What do Americans call dandruff?)

Heljä: Sitä sanotaan dandruffiksi. (They call it dandruff) (Giggling)

Laura: Ei se kuulosta ollenkaan siltä. (It doesn't sound like it at all.)

An individual's bodily reactions to a word are very much influenced by the way the person has experienced the word initially--and the bilingual obviously will acquire a dual (or multiple) set of emotional associations with various words. Our feelings are tied to the language(s) we use. This is one reasonable reason for a parent to use his or her native language with his or her child. Our native tongue <u>feels</u> natural; when we speak it, we not only mean what we say, we sound more authentic: our speech feels more natural to our listeners. Often a word used in a language has a slightly different feel to it than the "equivalent" word in the other.--which, because it feels different (Laura's response to "dandruff," for example) doesn't seem equivalent. A bilingual has the advantage of knowing the "correct" (or common) feelings in both languages But even before the bilingual child acquires that dual sense, the possession of an

emotional sense of rightness in one language creates a solid foundation for learning in the second language. Having a concept in one language frequently makes it easier to expand to new concepts in another, or in other areas of the same language.

How can we maintain Anna's Finnish? There is no doubt that the majority language always has a strong influence on a child. Due to our older children's bilingual experience both in the family and in the two speech communities (the U.S. and Finland) they speak both languages fluently. Our oldest daughter, Laura, taught herself to read English in Finland while learning Swedish as her first foreign language in the third grade. Sara, 8, has learned to read and write English in 3 months. In school they are doing as well as their American peers. What seems to be important in maintaining a child's bilingual abilities is that he or she retain a strong sense and experience that both languages are meaningful. Children need a purpose for using a language - one of the most important factors in motivating any kind of learning. Parent modeling is important. Seeing their parents reading, writing, talking and having social contacts in both languages helps them to understand the importance of both languages. For a bilingual child both languages are part of their single (but very complex) cultural heritage. But what happens in a situation outside their home environments?

School and home environments are often two separate worlds for the child. The expectations, values and prioritities at school can be so alien to

children's home experiences that they can not see any linkage between the two.

Many positive attempts have been made by teachers to see the variety of experience bi- or multilingual children are bringing to a classroom. Certainly teachers can benefit from that variety in their teaching if they approach learning in a way that facilitates the usage of children's own experiences (Commins, 1989, Wallace and Goodman, 1989, Fox 1983). Our traditional teaching techniques of drilling and drumming facts and rote memorization and looking out for mistakes are not appropriate for giving children encouragement in bilingual learning. Attempts to facilitate children's learning in schools by engaging their minds in a meaningful and connected way are more an exception than the rule. Fortunately some of the exceptions, like the project approach which encourage children to learn in developmentally approapriate ways, are spreading and getting teachers excited (Katz & Chard, 1989). The everyday life of a classroom is different from the ideal situation, since the teachers are under an immense amount of pressure, and often come across as mere technicians in carrying out orders from higher levels of command. A lot of teachers tend to agree with research findings about bilingualism in principle but in practice they often see it as a hindrance to their normal classroom routines.

Teachers certainly can't be expected to learn every bilingual's second language to make him or her feel more at home in school. But the gap

between the home and school environments is not solely a function of the language that is being used; it's felt by monolingual children as well. In fact, the chasm between a monolingual child's environment and home culture can be as drastically different as the bilingual's two worlds of home and school. There is a dissociation that is woven into the way time is structured in schools; what kind of activities are important to the teacher and what are his or her priorities and goals. It can be seen in the way interactions are conducted, how children's needs are met, how learning is portrayed as a celebration, or as a dreaded necessary evil. There is a lot that teachers can do. One of the most important things is to learn to know each child (including a bilingual child) as a unique individual and to learn to treasure rich (even unfamiliar) experiences with children. The teacher's values may seem "normal" and therefore universal, but they are not; norms are always culture-bound. For teachers to realize this they need to begin to shift out of the role of manic knowledge producers under the pressure of standardized tests, and learn to see language use in richly interactive, interrelational ways. Before we can even talk about various ways of using multilingual and multicultural learning experiences , we need a major attitude change. Administrators, decision makers, teacher educators and teachers need to learn to switch questions with our children from "What is the matter with them? Why aren't they learning?" to "How can I understand the children better?" Accepting the child's experiences at home and elsewhere and opening the school up to real life and the

surrounding communites is a good first step.

Teachers and parents are too often seen as each others' adversaries. We need to move from predetermined hostile positions to become curious, open-minded, caring co-workers and each others' supporters in learning to live and helping our children do so as well. As a teacher I would hope that I could be open to each student's experience, including the experience that is wrapped up with their parents and home-life; and to change as well, to new developments not only in the lives of my students and their parents, but of me and my family as well. As a parent I would hope that the school environment in which my children spend large portions of their young lives might be sensitive to their needs and experiences, and might accept them for what they are, helping them to enrich the people they already are ---including their bilingual experiences---rather than imposing a mechanical factual straitjacket on them from the outside. The real challenge for parents and teachers is to give children room to grow, opportunities for them to find out who they are and where they'd like to be heading. But first we need to find that out ourselves.

Notes

1. Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to attend to language structures in and for themselves (Cazden, 1974).

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